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ON THE COVER

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The Power of Potential

The community received tremendous news this past week. Every day on Big Gay News, I read four stories that affect this community in some way. They're on our website, they're in the podcast, and they're on Twitter and Facebook. The potential topics of the news stories skew across the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and ally subgroups of people, and might involve celebrities, politics, athletes, businesses, or anything that affects the rainbow community. At the beginning of the week, I reported via PBS News Hour that same-sex marriage laws are linked to fewer youth suicide attempts according to a new study. What an uplifting, heartening report of data to support this community.

According to PBS News Hour, "State legalization of same-sex marriage appears to be linked to a decrease in adolescent suicide, based on a new analysis published Monday in *JAMA Pediatrics*. The results give more context to the potential effects of social policy on mental health. The researchers found that suicide attempts by high school students decreased by 7 percent in states after they passed laws to legalize same-sex marriage, before the Supreme Court legalized it nationwide in 2015. Among LGB high school students, the decrease was especially concentrated, with suicide attempts falling by 14 percent. But in states that did not legalize same-sex marriage, there was no change." The study leader and postdoctoral fellow at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Julia Raifman, said that this new research "helps us better understand why we might see elevated rates of suicide attempts among LGBT adolescents."

The author of the article, Corinne Segal, continued, "While the study drew a correlation between lower suicide rates and same-sex marriage legalization, it did not explain a potential cause for the lowered rates. It is pos-

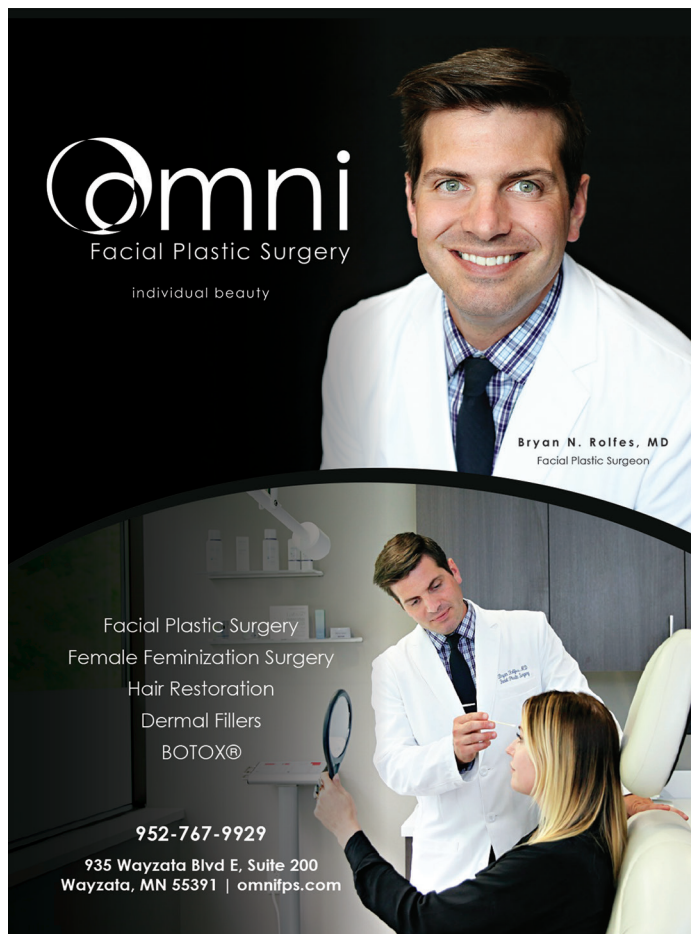
sible that the laws 'communicated to young LGB populations that they were equal, and that improved their mental health,' Raifman said. It's also possible that increased visibility for same-sex marriage, both in politics and media coverage, increased LGB adolescents' sense of social support, she said."

Later in the week I also had to report that transgender students would be losing the federal guidance that supported their rights under Title IX to use the bathroom that matches their gender identities. The rights still exist under Title IX, but in a time when we're seeing how increased support and visibility in politics and media coverage for marriage possibly helps the kids of this community decide against suicide, we need to be ever-vigilant in our advocacy for trans adults and kids whose support in policy and media tends to wax and wane.

Social policy affects mental health. This is nothing new to this community. We know it. Stories from these pages, from our lives, from our families, from our neighborhoods, from our news feeds...they all attest to how this community is always affected by policies and public sentiment. And I will gladly grasp with greedy hands any data that might back up the anecdotal evidence, because we seem to always be building a case for the existence of the people in our pages, in our community, in our families, in our world. This data might say that legalizing same-sex marriage potentially resulted in fewer suicides, rather than definitively proving it, but even a link between the two is fortifying. Feel strength in it. Recognize the power in supporting each other. Suit up and show up. Because, on both large and small scales, we need to be there for all members of this rainbow.

With you and with thanks,

Andy ■



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What's Your Strong Suit?

Without going into tedious facts and verifications, it is my observation, my devoutly held belief, that I and many others are suffering from stress, confusion, and angst.

My own response to any of these emotions is to retreat to my La-Z-Boy and sleep til it passes. But the current miasma is more intense and bodes a longer duration than my usual concerns (beer, books, and spondulix).

I'm not an active person, nor have I the capital to donate to every pressing cause flooding my inbox 24/7. A recent epiphany offered me the revelation that one thing I can do is to dig inward and work to develop those gifts I do have; to be in some small way, in the largest way possible, an identifiable presence in a world becoming more chaotic daily.

One thing you can hold on to is whatever concrete things you do. For example: One friend of long standing is a yarn-bomber. Local street statuary of metal ducks and a seated iron gentleman are graced when cold weather comes with little wool hats for the paddlers and a scarf for

the iron elder.

Others, some my age, take themselves by bicycle, supported by a cane, or toting an O2 cylinder in a backpack, out to exercise, attend book clubs, or just motivate about. Lately, I've been getting out (in the winter!) to photograph and have items showing now in a shop and soon to be on display in a local brewery.

My point, and I do have one, is that while entropy ever pulls, and art and playfulness will not solve the ills of the world, activity of any sort is an antidote to lethargy, despair, and submission. An engaged individual is his own person, resistant to being herded, muzzled, and molded. If knitting hats for iron ducks is your passion, then you are apt to fight to keep your needles clicking.

If your passion is to be even more active, if your deep pocketbook can fund, go for it. But we all have something we cherish, something we want enough to keep it free. Find it, exercise it, hold it dear. ■



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Deathtrap. Photo by Roger Watts

DEATHTRAP

Through March 12
Theatre in the Round, 245 Cedar Ave.
Minneapolis
612-333-3010
www.theatreintheround.org

Ira Levin is best known for his horror novel *Rosemary's Baby*. But his play *Deathtrap* was nominated for a Tony for Best Play in the late 1970s and also won an Edgar (Allan Poe) Award for Best Play. At the time, *Deathtrap* was a sensation in part because it portrayed a gay relationship between two men of different generations. It ran for four years on Broadway. Vincent Hannam and Charles Numrich play the couple in the current Theatre in the Round Players revival. It's the kind of well-written play that TRP typically does so well.

THE ROYAL FAMILY

Through March 19
Guthrie Theater, 818 S 2nd St.
Minneapolis
612-377-2224
www.guthrietheater.org

The Barrymores were the first family of the American theater in the early 20th century. Edna Ferber and George S. Kaufman spoofed them affectionately in their splendid 1927 comedy, *The Royal Family*. Renown New York director Rachel Chavkin has staged the piece with eye toward the period, style, and spirit it is meant to evince, and at the same time Marte Johanne Ekhougen's set is true to the period and class but introduces a skeletal design effect part way through that displays miscellaneous remnants of the Cavendish family's past. It's

reminiscent of a theater storage room.

Of course, the Cavendishes are stand-ins for the Barrymores. The night I saw the show the pace began a bit sluggishly but it soon careened into the rollicking effect that makes for highly satisfying comedic theater. Chavkin gets marvelously exaggerated performances while still tapping into the central theme of a woman choosing between career and family. In 1927, this was groundbreaking and this topnotch cast makes you get a rich, textured sense of that as well as flourish and flair.

Michelle O'Neill is perfectly elegant as protagonist Julie Cavendish. She is fed up with having a life on the boards in sacrifice of a private life. Fans of the film gem *All About Eve* will recognize a similar issue with its protagonist Margo Channing played by Bette Davis. Elizabeth Franz as Julie's elderly mother, Fanny, gives a winningly endearing performance. She still intends to hit the boards on a national tour no matter how rigorous. As long as there is breath in her body she will be a working actress! That's her purpose in life.

Two seasoned Guthrie regulars sparkle: Bill McCallum is vibrant as a relation always cooking up some theatrical deal and Shawn Hamilton shines as Oscar, a theatrical money man who makes the family push the envelope in terms of both art and popularity.

However, two artists stand out most impressively, one as an actor the other for lighting. Matthew Saldivar is a mercurial vision uncannily reminiscent of a silent movie star icon. His comic timing is fabulous and his irreverent exposure of his body is sexy yet stays in keeping with the show's madcap dynamism. You can't help but love him in boxers and a raccoon coat! Bradley King's lighting is simply inspired as he gorgeously enhances certain moments that other productions of the same play would likely miss.

THE KING AND I

Feb. 28–March 5
Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Ave.
Minneapolis
800-982-2787
www.hennepintheatetrust.org

The Tony-winning revival of the 1951 Rodgers and Hammerstein classic plays the Orpheum on its national tour. Based on Margaret Landon's acclaimed 1944 novel *Anna and the King of Siam*, its look at institutionalized misogyny in an Asian country in the 19th century is vividly contrasted with the feistiness of a widowed Victorian mother hired to teach English to the King's children. Both the



The King and I. Photo by Matthew Murphy

book and the musical are still considered to be multicultural works to be reckoned with.

What will be of interest to theatergoers who love Broadway shows that have toured the Twin Cities is that some of the same talent that created the astounding Rodgers and Hammerstein revivals of *Carousel* directed by Nicholas Hytner (*Miss Saigon*) in the 1990s and the 2008 revival of *South Pacific* are involved this revival of *The King and I*. Lincoln Center producer Ira Weitzman says, "Our approach, particularly under the direction of Bart Sher, is to revive these shows with as fresh an eye as we would apply to a new show, while being reverent of the material. The amazing thing about Rodgers and Hammerstein is that their work is still relevant and resonant to today's audiences." (Note: Bart Sher is also known for his Guthrie Theater productions.)

THE RED SHOES

March 2-19

Open Eye Figure Theatre, 506 E 24th St.
Minneapolis
612-874-6338

www.openeyetheatre.org

Hans Christian Andersen's story of a haunted pair of red shoes delivered to a young girl's doorstep is given a film noir treatment for the stage by director-designer-writer Joel Sass. Kimberly Richardson plays the role so that the effects of amnesia, mul-

tiple personalities, and what is real and what is not become a central theme.

Sass shares, "I've always loved *The Red Shoes* for the idea of a pair of shoes literally taking control of someone's body, and carrying them away on a series of adventures. It's a prospect that's both frightening and exciting. Plus, I have always liked urban legends about people buying haunted shoes in thrift stores. So those two interests have come together on this project."

He adds, "I'm thrilled to be collaborat-

ing with the amazing actor-dancer Kimberly Richardson! She's such a chameleon of character and voice, and we're having a great time conjuring up the various inhabitants of a film noir apartment building."

STILL LIFE FOR THE COWLES CENTER

March 17-19

Cowles Center, 528 Hennepin Ave.
Minneapolis
612-206-3600

www.thecowlescenter.org

Morgan Thorson choreographs a piece that breaks the rules, or as she puts it, "kills the choreography," to challenge and undermine movement patterns. Out of this comes what promises to be a fresh new work. Thorson says, "the dancers are given the power to change the trajectory of the piece, and it's different every time. It's a flip of authority, empowering people to make changes on their own terms."

She explains, "The dancers need each other to kill the choreography. They won't all use the same strategies; some will interrupt movement sequences with cut-throat contrarian action, while others will strike a static, presentational tableau. To fully realize their rebellion and survive the upheaval, they must recognize and account for each other's efforts in their own actions."

This is a compressed 90-minute version of an on-site dance installation that played at the Weisman Art Museum in 2015.

Thorson is renown for her experimental work. The Cowles Center has become a major dance center nationally. ■



Still Life for the Cowles Center. Photo by Mena Burnette



Agent Max

Photo by Jessica Zerby

Growing up, I was a huge fan of the James Bond franchise. *The World is Not Enough* was a personal favorite. The hot trifecta that was Denise Richards, Sophie Marceau, and a younger Pierce Brosnan excited me. I wanted to be a Bond girl more than life. While these films are undoubtedly wrought with misogyny, as a kid, something about the dichotomy of a perfectly groomed bombshell kicking butt, jumping off buildings, and riding on motorcycles was super-enthralling to me.

As I approached adulthood, I continued to work my way through the action wall at the video store, but another realization set in. There

were no gay characters in these films. While the presence of queer roles has somewhat improved in mainstream film and television, the action genre has, to this day, remained particularly devoid of our GLBT brothers and sisters.

The role of an action star — the fight choreography, auto drifting, athleticism, and tough mental constitution — for whatever reason, appear to be an overtly masculine trade. However, if you live in the real world, you'll meet many a gay man who is fully capable of the violence, tenacity, and drive it takes to defeat the bad guys.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 ➔

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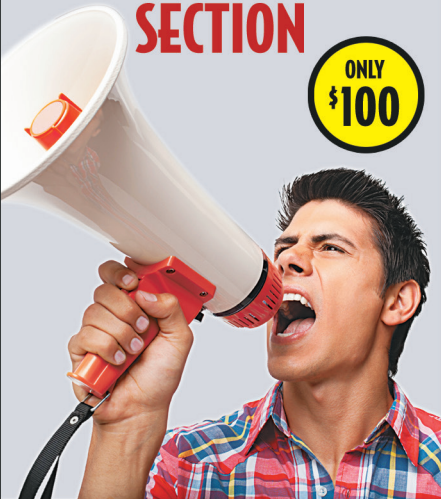
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Working as a video director and producer, it became my mission to create the content that I wanted to see in the world. I needed to make a queer action series. For years, my vision for what this could be became a daily fixation, but to make it happen I needed a star.

Enter Max Malanaphy. I first proposed my concept to the *RuPaul's Drag Race* alum in August of 2016. Who better to lead the charge than a tall, model-like drag queen with a theatre background and a love for movement? I was excited (and frankly a bit surprised) that he was so happy to oblige. I recently asked Max why he decided to work together, in his words, "Peaceful people can only remain docile for so long. I had the opportunity to be an agent of justice, and of creation."

Next, a rigorous pre-production phase began. With a team of five writers, the story quickly became a topical one, a rich real estate mogul, planning to destroy poor and disadvantaged city neighborhoods. Getting director of photography Aleutian Calabay was a huge encouragement, as well as the support of his incredible crew. Casting became focused on intelligent bodies, largely dancers, capable of taking falls and learning fight choreography. Max and I had a lot of conversations about who we wanted this hero to be and how the overall style of the series would be a reflection of who he is as both a personality and a person.

In November of 2016, production of *AGENT MAX* began. I'll never forget the first day of shooting, the moment Max first stepped out of the car, in full costume. Clad in shiny black-heeled boots, a black jumpsuit, and cascading grey hair, a hero was born. In speaking on the similarities to his crime fighting character, Max said, "Agent Max and I definitely share a sensuality. Also, an extreme reactivity and sensitivity to the darker facets of human nature. She is certainly more unafraid and unabashed in her manner than I have been. Both are qualities I'm working very hard to imbue within my being."

Throughout the 12-hour shoot days and the physical and emotional demands of the role, Max became a self-described "Tarantino bitch in the making." The series itself is a short pilot to a larger dream. The web series plays out in three short acts. Viewers can look forward to fast-paced action, violence, subtle and not-so-subtle real life parallels, and the triumphant return of Max Malanaphy to an on-camera role. You'll laugh, you'll cry, and hopefully you'll ask for more. ■

The first episode of AGENT MAX releases online Thursday, March 23, 2017. Follow @maxcollective and @agentjohnmark on Instagram & Twitter for more information.





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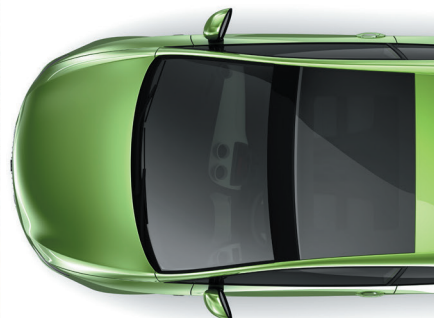
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OUR SCENE

EAT THE MENU WITH BRADLEY TRAYNOR | PHOTOS BY HUBERT BONNET



(From left) A new look for an old space, featuring warm modernity; belly up for a bowl of scratch-made dan dan noodles.

JUN

It hadn't even occurred to me that the North Loop was missing something. Until, that is, I ate the something it was missing. In the restaurant it was missing.

Nestled in the heart of the North Loop along Washington Avenue in the Else Warehouse building is JUN. This labor of a mother-son (Jessie Wong and Jack Wang) team's love, JUN takes solid Sichuan fare in all its fiery glory and elevates it with a class worthy of its modern, contemporary surroundings.

A couple weeks back, some friends and I popped in to JUN to taste our way across the tempting new menu. And tempted we were.

The space, as I mentioned, is modern without being cold. There's a warmth that permeates both the dining area and the bar. This is the kind of place you'll want to head with a few friends after work for drinks and

small plates or drag a besty to when you're craving some serious Chinese.

The menu itself is broken up into small dishes, soups, rice and noodles and the requisite proteins you'd expect. Nothing complicated or too clever for the room. We're talking quality Sichuan-inspired classics.

Our afternoon started with a number of the small dishes, all of which are freshly handmade daily. JUN's bao bao, for example, steamed buns stuffed with pork belly and freshly grated ginger, are heavenly pillows of porky goodness.

The spicy Sichuan dumplings drenched in chili sauce literally melt in the mouth. As they can be prepared either steamed or pan-fried, go ahead and get an order of each. Again, fresh handmade dumplings in this town aren't a too common occurrence. Take advantage and indulge.

The same can be said for the dan dan noodles. These scratch-made

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Son and mother team, Jack Wang and Jessie Wong. Photo by TJ Turner

udon noodles are served up with a spicy sesame sauce and topped with greens and minced pork. I haven't had noodles of this caliber in ages and, frankly, I could've ended the meal inhaling two orders of these alone.

But I didn't. Lucky for me. And lucky for you.

Before we get to proteins, permit me to rave madly about one more noodle dish. Trust me. It's worth every word of recommendation. If you visit JUN without ordering the beef chow fun, you've failed. There's nothing particularly unusual about the dish. Until you taste it, that is. It might just be beef stir-fried with flat wide rice noodles, but there's so much more going on inside this dish. It's Chinese comfort food at its best. You can quite literally taste the love that went into making it.

On to proteins and the world really is your oyster. And by oyster, I mean pork, poultry, beef, lamb, and seafood.

We inhaled the entire plate of La Zi chicken. These fried chicken wings, stir-fried with fresh ginger, garlic, and chili peppers would make a perfect appetizer or an entire meal. Lamb lovers lucked out with the Yaqian Rou. This heaping plate full of crispy, cumin-coated mini lamb skewers was a technicolor feast of flavor and definitely one of the more unique dishes on the menu.



Porkwise, traditionalists will fall in love with the classic Peking shredded pork with scratch-made pancakes. Stuffing the tangy pork inside the warm, pillowy pockets of steamed dough quickly became a table favorite.

Speaking of table favorites, we can't complete our menu journey without mentioning cocktails. And, gratefully, mocktails. The craft cocktail scene seems a requirement for any North Loop establishment and JUN is no exception. The cocktails and mocktails both flowed at our table and took top honors by all who imbibed. Special mentions for both the Cranberry Fluff and Oolong Nog.

Hot and sour soup to nuts, JUN is a welcome addition to the North Loop. This fiery little pocket of hand-crafted Sichuan cookery lights up an already beaming stretch of Minneapolis' food and drink finest. The next time you're craving homemade noodles or something on the spicier side of the block, pay JUN a visit. And don't forget that order of beef chow fun! ■

JUN

730 N Washington Ave., Minneapolis
www.junnorthloop.com



(From left) Yaqian Rou, the cumin-coated mini lamb skewers; a unique and delectable dessert of sticky rice and soybean flour topped with brown sugar syrup; a table-full of cocktails and mocktails to please a crowd.

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LAVENDER



Palm Springs, California. Photo by Mike Marcotte

A Change Will Do You Good: The Evolving Charm of Palm Springs

It's refreshing to experience the slower pace that vacations usually offer, whether you're lounging by the pool or taking a lunch break with no end time. Change in routine and scenery do a mind and body good.

Change is also refreshing for Palm Springs, California, a city delicately balancing the best of mid-20th century architecture with new development. Their first newly constructed hotel in a decade, ARRIVE, recently opened. New businesses are popping up, giving even the Minnesota snowbird who frequently travels to the Coachella Valley something new to discover.

Located two hours east of Los Angeles and two hours northeast of San Diego, Palm Springs is one of the most GLBT-friendly cities in the country. It boasts more than 20 resorts exclusively for the gay and lesbian community. And despite being home to only 46,000 residents, Palm Springs has its own GLBT business guide and smartphone app.

The gay men I met who call Palm Springs home love their city. Many are transplants coming from overpriced San Francisco. They pursued their dreams as business owners and entrepreneurs.

I quickly discovered they all wish the same thing for their city: younger residents. It's no secret that Palm Springs attracts an older crowd. As a single, 30-year-old travel writer, I boarded the plane in Minnesota not quite sure of how vibrant this town would be. I didn't think I could bond

with the city and those it attracts. But Palm Springs' identity doesn't reflect the "dinner at 4:30 and bedtime at 9:00" routine. Gay bars are open for late-night drinks and karaoke. Restaurants are packed throughout the night with the sounds of live music and laughter.

I was impressed with how easily I could travel around Palm Springs. Uber exists and no trip will cost more than \$10. And a free trolley loops around town Thursday through Sunday nights.

WHERE TO STAY

The vast majority of GLBT-owned resorts in Palm Springs are exclusively for men. When you reserve a room, ask the resort owners if there will be a social hour the nights you're there. Depending on the number of rooms occupied, they will host a gathering around 5 p.m. so guests can mingle over adult beverages. Make sure to coordinate your check-in so you arrive before then as these socials are a great way to meet other travelers.

I stayed at multiple resorts and would recommend switching spots during your trip, especially if it's your first time to Palm Springs. Each property has its own vibe. And it also prevents the items in your suitcase from exploding all over your room.

Only one all-male resort in Palm Springs is not clothing-optional. This

trip marked my first time staying at any hotel where you could freely walk around nude. I wasn't sure what to expect. Or see. But to be completely honest, the clothing-optional part didn't factor in too much. Guys attending those social hours were fully dressed. Maybe it was the fact that temperatures were cool, but I wouldn't let the clothing-optional policy or your body image stop you from considering a property.

La Dolce Vita Resort & Spa

1491 S Via Soledad, Palm Springs

www.ladolcevitaresort.com

There is a touch of Minnesota in the guest rooms and suites at La Dolce Vita by means of baskets full of Aveda products in the bathrooms. The all-male property is home to two whirlpools, two pools (they're heated in the winter), and a full-service spa featuring "Romeo and Romeo" massages. From the cobblestone walkways to the carefully manicured gardens, La Dolce Vita has a quaint "mom and pop" type feel (or I should say "pop and pop"). And with 20 rooms, it's one of the bigger clothing-optional resorts in town. I recommend La Dolce Vita if you're looking to make new friends or are heading to Palm Springs for a shorter stay. Rooms do include mini-fridges and microwaves, but do not have the fully functioning kitchens you'll find at other resorts. However, they do offer a complimentary breakfast.

INNdulge

601 Grenfall Rd., Palm Springs

www.inndulge.com

While lounging poolside at the INNdulge guest happy hour, it's common to meet men staying at this clothing-optional resort for a month or more. All of them are very loyal to this property, coming back year after year. The resort, with 24 poolside rooms and suites, is in the midst of another remodel, updating rooms with impressive kitchens which include full-size refrigerators and stoves.

What you'll see on the walls isn't what you'll find at a Hampton Inn. The erotica artwork is tasteful and unique in each guest room. This property is perfect whether you are staying for a day or a month. And it's great if you're not interested in eating out for every meal.

Triangle Inn

555 E San Lorenzo Rd., Palm Springs

www.triangle-inn.com

The owners of the Triangle Inn, Stephen and Michael, live on this eight-room, clothing-optional property. My room reminded me of the two-bedroom apartment in which I previously resided in Minnesota. A fully stocked kitchen has cups and plates, plus there's a dining room table. A full living room set and a separate bedroom make your suite feel like a home.

The property has the Palm Springs' signature mid-century modern design that the Rat Pack would love. It's the only GLBT hotel on the city's historic site survey. If you're looking to sneak away with your sweetie, this quiet spot is perfect, although it does still offer the opportunity to connect with fellow travelers. It's best for a longer stay in Palm Springs.

Stephen and Michael also operate a house adjoined to the property that can easily accommodate eight people if you're looking to go with a group of friends.

East Canyon Resort and Spa

288 E Camino Monte Vista, Palm Springs

www.eastcanyonps.com

When I walked into the office at East Canyon, Palm Springs' only all-male clothing-required resort, the newest owners told me they received the keys to the property less than two weeks prior. They're busy with up-



(Clockwise from top) La Dolce Vita Resort & Spa. INNdulge. East Canyon Resort and Spa. Triangle Inn. Photos by Mike Marcotte

grades and tweaks, but honestly, it's already the most polished property I stayed at during my trip. The rooms replicate hotel-quality and provide beautiful views of the courtyard pool. Cookies awaited us as we entered the suite, and we were offered a drink soon after settling in. Breakfast and lunch can be pre-ordered, meaning there's no need to worry about finding food before you head out around town. The 14 rooms are snug across two levels, yet it's a quiet property. East Canyon best serves those who are more accustomed to more of a modern, tidy feel and those who want a quieter, more secluded trip.

WHERE TO EAT

Palm Springs isn't an Olive Garden and Applebee's type of town. In fact, chain restaurants are banned in certain parts of the city. The results are inspiring. Charming, locally owned establishments have a chance to thrive. Here are some of those recommended spots, all GLBT-owned.

Townie Bagels

650 E Sunny Dunes Rd., Palm Springs
www.towniebagels.com

Townie Bagels exists from decades of love and dedication. Owner Andy Wysocki wanted to bake bread for fun. And after completing coursework at the San Francisco Baking Institute, he'd bring his creations to the Sunday coffee group he'd attend with his husband, Bill. That evolved to setting up shop at farmers' markets, and then opening their own restaurant on the southern end of Palm Springs in the summer of 2015. Their system is slick: in the back, Andy bakes bagels, "less-gluten" crackers (made with almond flour as the main ingredient), scones, and baguettes, while Bill handles front-of-house duties.

The sausage, egg, and cheese sandwich I had was perfect on an everything bagel that wasn't overloaded with onion nor spilling poppy seeds. And for a Wednesday morning at 9 a.m., the shop was packed. In the kitchen, Andy figures that they sell 1,200 bagels every Saturday. And that's less than two years in.

Tipper's Gourmet Marketplace

276 N Palm Canyon Dr., Palm Springs
www.tippersgourmetmarketplace.com

Felix Tipper, a Los Angeles talent agency owner, noticed opportunity in Palm Springs and opened Tipper's Gourmet Marketplace in the summer of 2016. And like Townie Bagels, Tipper's is the realization of a dream. Felix's love for cooking is a passion which he told me is a way for him to release steam.

The neatly organized and bright shop mixes a fast casual restaurant concept, serving breakfast and lunch, with grab-and-go options featuring the best meats and cheeses in southern California, along with pre-cooked dinners for your backyard soirees. The idea is to offer visitors the chance to pick up meats and cheeses to bring back to the hotel room for a late night snack or to pack for a picnic.

The restaurant is tucked away on a busy street in Palm Springs, making it a perfect location for meeting up without losing the ability to hear each other.

The salami and Manchego sandwich I had on a European baguette was light yet filling. The finale of a chocolate chip and pretzel cookie provided the boost of sugar I needed to accomplish a stressful afternoon of shopping.

Pho 533

1775 E Palm Canyon Dr., Palm Springs
www.pho533palm Springs.com

I stopped by Pho 533 the first night I was in Palm Springs, and it set a high standard for my entire trip. No detail is overlooked, including the



(From top to bottom) Townie Bagels. Tipper's Gourmet Marketplace. Photos by Mike Marcotte; Pho 533. Photo by David A. Lee Photography

strip-mall restaurant's name. 533 marks the number painted on the Land Transport Tanker picking up the restaurant's founder and her 11 brothers and sisters from Saigon while the city fell to the North Vietnamese back in 1975.

Today, Chad Gardner, a catering company owner, runs the kitchen and his Viet-fusion menu includes the traditional pho, a perfect comfort food, along with BLT and fried shrimp spring rolls. By recommendation, I ordered the fried chicken, a peculiar choice, but one I don't regret. The meat was tender and the skin was well-seasoned and not too crunchy.

Since taking the helm in March 2015, Gardner expanded Pho 533 into his neighbor's space, adding a bar, additional seating, and a chef's counter for spring rolls.

WHAT TO DO

Palm Springs Aerial Tramway

1 Tram Way, Palm Springs
www.pstramway.com

The number one Palm Springs attraction is the Aerial Tramway. A short drive from the valley takes you from an elevation of 479 feet to the base at 2,600 feet. But that's just the beginning. Hopping out of the car, I was skeptical of the \$26 ticket price, but that was quickly forgotten. At base, you climb on the world's largest rotating tram car (think really big gondola) for a 10-minute breathtaking ride up to 8,516 feet, going through five unique habitation zones. At the top, four feet of snow awaited me at the 14,000-acre Mt. San Jacinto State Park and Wilderness Area, giving those who miss snow a chance to ski. If you're not in California to play in the snow, Mountain Station has a restaurant, bar, and picnic areas.

Before you start your adventure, you'll want to make sure to buy tickets in advance online. Trams fill up quickly which can result in quite the wait.

Palm Springs Air Museum

745 N Gene Autry Trail, Palm Springs
www.palmspringsairmuseum.org

A visit to the Palm Springs Air Museum wasn't on my original itinerary. In fact, my travel partner, Jacob, and I stopped by only because we had a couple extra hours. It turned into a highlight of my trip. The museum, located on the tarmac of the Palm Springs airport, has a wide array of planes flown in World War II, including two featured in the movie *Pearl Harbor*. You can stand inside many of the 55 aircrafts, and the museum is staffed with veterans who volunteer their time to graciously share stories and vast knowledge. For me, it was one of the most interactive ways I have experienced this era of American history. The museum, which is privately funded, is now building its third overflow hanger.

Destination PSP

170 N Palm Canyon Dr., Palm Springs
www.destinationpsp.com

Modern day blends well with the 1950s inside Destination PSP, a home goods and apparel store located in the heart of Palm Springs' shopping district. Many of the items for sale, including coffee mugs and clocks, are designed by the store's owners. They're preserving Palm Springs' identity and making it cool for you to display it in your home. From placemats to postcards, Destination PSP was the best spot I discovered to purchase a sliver of desert living for your dog-sitter or mother-in-law back home.

WHEN TO VISIT

The main tourist season runs late-January through April. Hotel property owners mentioned to me that British and German tourists love go-

ing in the summer to get a dose of heat, so if you think accents are hot, plan a trip then. But Minnesotans be wary, triple digit temperatures are common in the desert; July's average high is 108 degrees.

The Coachella Music Festival in mid-April is only a 40-minute car ride from Palm Springs, resulting in big crowds. Palm Springs' annual White Party, held the first weekend of May, draws a large array of younger visitors. Multiple resorts offer complimentary Wednesday night stays when you book for multiple nights, and that offer can extend into the peak season.

The Palm Springs International Airport is in the middle of town with Sun Country and Delta offering non-stop flights from Minneapolis-St. Paul International.

PALM SPRINGS ISN'T ONLY FOR GAY MEN

Lesbian travelers should check out Lucy and Gail Events as a resource before booking a trip to Coachella Valley. Their website is home to what locals call the best calendar for events of interest to women, including mixers and the annual Women's Jazz Festival. Palm Springs is also home to the L-Fund, a nonprofit offering financial assistance to lesbians in crisis. The organization holds fundraisers throughout the year. ■

Find additional Palm Springs picks from Mike, including what their nightlife scene has to offer, on the Lavender website.

This story was composed with assistance from the Palm Springs Bureau of Tourism. Their website, www.visitpalmsprings.com, offers a comprehensive, one-stop shop listing of resorts, restaurants, shops and nightlife, including a GLBT guide listing all gay resorts in the city.



(Clockwise from top) Palm Springs Air Museum. Destination PSP. Photos by Mike Marcotte

By Randy Stern

PREVIEW THE 2017 TWIN CITIES AUTO SHOW



here else can you see every new vehicle sold in the Twin Cities without the hassle of the show-room floor?

The 44th Annual Twin Cities Auto Show presented by SuperAmerica is back for 2017! Inside the Minneapolis Convention Center, visitors will expect to see 575 automobiles from 37 brands worth about \$35 million. This annual effort of the Greater Metropolitan Automobile Dealers Association of Minnesota will welcome thousands of ticketed visitors, the media, and industry people for nine days of fun and engagement.

If you have not been to a Twin Cities Auto Show, you are in for a real treat. It starts with the 37 brands showing their latest and greatest on the main floor. They are flanked by many other experiences for the family to enjoy. Camp Jeep is a way to see how the most well-known lineup of SUVs perform through obstacles that test a vehicle's mettle. Potential customers could actually drive the newest models outside of the convention center on a short loop through the Ride & Drive program.

Since there is a growing number of owners of plug-in electric and hybrid vehicles in our region, there is the Electric Room presented by Revolt. This is where you can explore the latest in vehicles and charging systems. One could also enjoy the finest automobiles sold in the Twin Cities by walking through Luxury Lane, which would include vehicles from Bentley, Maserati, Aston Martin, and other luxury brands.

The second floor will feature a new exhibit by RAM Trucks and Cabela's called "RAM Seasons." These will be rooms that show RAM Trucks in every season in Minnesota using props from Cabela's. Families will also have their space called The Neighborhood, which is presented in partnership with Parade of Homes.

Every year, the Twin Cities Auto Show

presents a Car of The Show. This year is the 2017 Chevrolet Cruze hatchback, one of the hottest vehicles out in the marketplace. The newest addition to the Cruze lineup shows off its versatile side with up to 47.2 cubic feet of cargo space, while offering sportier looks available in LT and Premier trims. A 1.4-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine powers the Cruze hatchback, with a choice of a manual or automatic transmission. There will one of these cars given away on the final day of the Auto Show.

This year marks the return of the Classic Car Walk. You can see some of the finest automobiles of years past on display by many Minnesota entities. There will also be appearances at the show by Rick and Kelly Dale from *American Restoration* and Dan and Laura Dotson from *Storage Wars* will make a public appearance on March 11 at 6:00 p.m. Other appearances will include the St. Paul Saints' mascot Mudonna, the Minnesota Wild mascot Nordy, and outdoor show host Ron Schara with his faithful companion, Raven.

The Auto Show will run from Saturday, March 11 through Sunday, March 19. Doors open at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday and Friday during the show run. All other days, the doors open at 4:00 p.m. Except for Sundays, the show remains open until 10:00 p.m.

Tickets are available in advance for \$10, while they are \$12 at the door. For young adults aged 11-15, the ticket price is \$6. If you are attending on Wednesday, March 15, tickets for everyone are just \$6. If you are an active duty member of the armed forces, or a retired or disabled veteran, you can attend the Auto Show on Tuesday, March 14 for free.

There are plenty of discount coupons available through various auto retailers and SuperAmerica stores. Advanced ticket sales are through the auto show's website at www.twincitiesautoshow.com.

If you "gotta go the Auto Show," do it this year! ■



Since there is a growing number of owners of plug-in electric and hybrid vehicles in our region, there is the Electric Room presented by Revolt.



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By Randy Stern

GOING ELECTRIC THE CHEVROLET BOLT EV AND VOLT

In this work, we are introduced to the automobile in many different ways. I would normally interface with a person at the manufacturer or supplier, talk about the vehicle, drive it and that's it.

There are occasions when automotive retailers are involved in this work. I do not just normally work with any dealership, but I work with ones where we feel a connection through their community-based efforts and outreach.

The email came from Roseville Chevrolet for us to look at their newest electrified

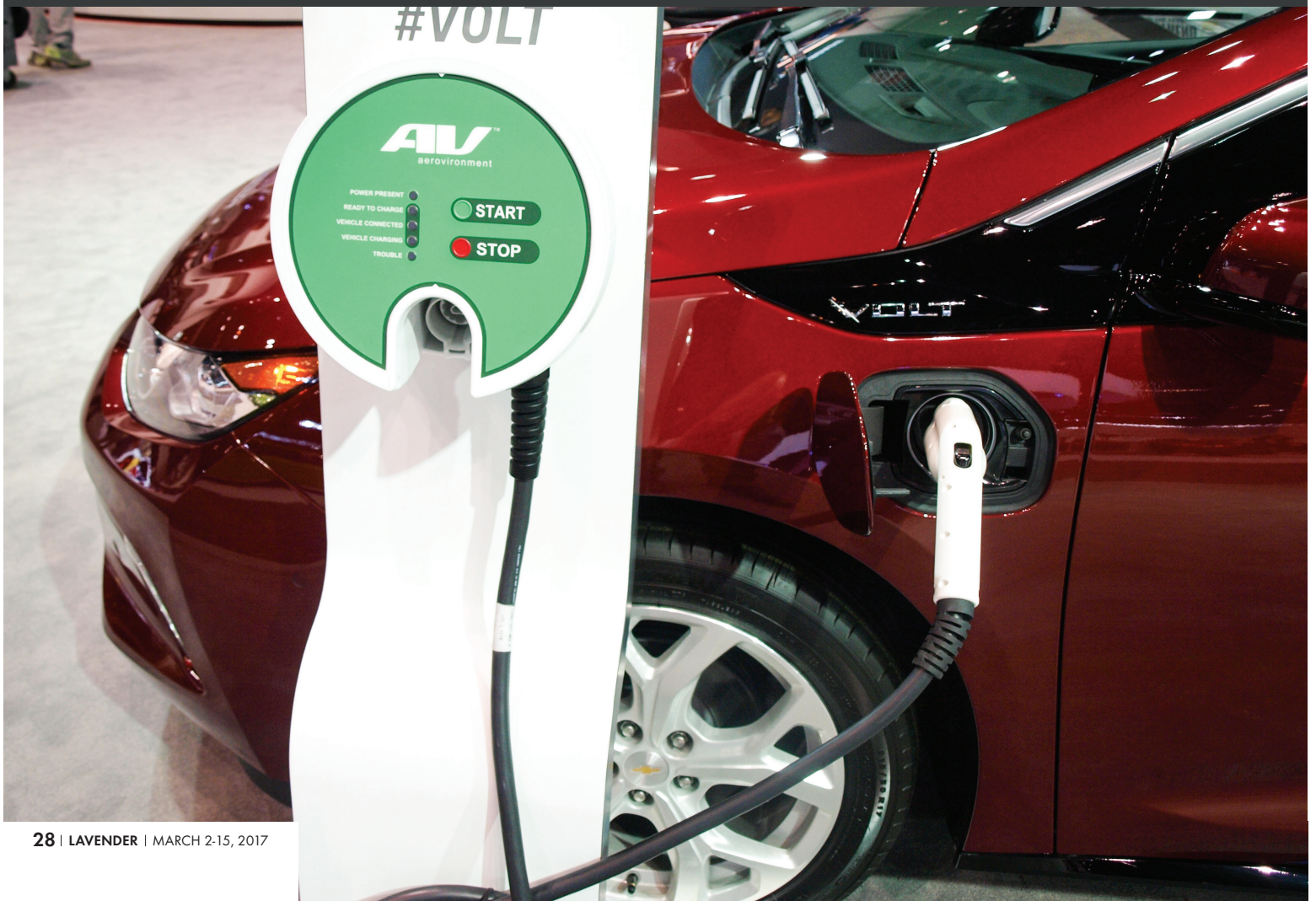
vehicles: the Volt and the Bolt EV. Normally, any discussion with such vehicles usually originates from the people at Chevrolet and would require me to go to Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, or Washington, DC for either vehicle. However, we are having this discussion right here in the Upper Midwest, in particular, the Twin Cities. This is important to note because of the nature of plug-in electric vehicles and the argument for and against them in year-round use in our climate.

The latter statement is becoming a moot point, thanks to the growing and significant number of owners of Tesla automobiles in our region. If one can afford to purchase

such a vehicle, is able to set up a charging provision at home, and can utilize the network of charging stations across the country, then they have proved the naysayers wrong.

General Motors is ready to do the same and prove those who are not keen on EVs wrong. They have done so through a two-vehicle strategy by emphasizing longer range either through a combination of electric and gasoline power or strictly through electric energy. The compact four-door hatchback Volt is in its second generation with its extended range electric propulsion system enhanced for more electric-only range, resulting in an improved combined range with gasoline being

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30 →







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There is a lot to like about the newest Volt. Our 2017 LT tester felt lighter than the original model we tested six years ago. It is also more attractive with a smarter looking interior.



Photos by Randy Stern



used as fuel after the electric charge is empty.

The Bolt EV is the second vehicle and perhaps the most important for this electrification strategy. GM has already announced that this city-car-sized four-door hatchback can reach 238 miles on a single charge, a range that puts it in Tesla territory. Because of this feat, along with other innovations and characteristics, the Bolt EV already earned *Motor Trend's* Car of The Year for 2017 and the North American Car of The Year, along with other accolades from the *Green Car Journal* and *Car and Driver*.

Here in the Upper Midwest, the anticipation has grown for the Chevrolet Bolt EV. In fact, David Zirbes, the sales manager at Rosedale Chevrolet in Roseville, stated that his dealership had four advanced orders for the electric vehicle by the first week of 2017. Rosedale Chevrolet, along with other dealers in the Upper Midwest, are anticipating receiving their first Bolt EVs by "late summer," according to Zirbes. However, Rosedale Chevrolet will bring one to the 44th Annual Twin Cities Auto Show for the Electric Room, aside from the one Chevrolet is bringing to the main stand. The show starts on March 11.

Bolt EV pricing starts at \$37,495, but a federal tax credit will bring that cost down

to below \$30,000.

While we will see the Bolt EVs at the Auto Show, there are plenty of customers who are being patient to receive their own Bolt EV. Others might be looking for something sooner. There are a few choices consumers in the Upper Midwest may consider: the Tesla Model S and X, Nissan Leaf, and the Ford Focus Energi, for example. There are also a few plug-in hybrid models that are out there to check out, including vehicles from Ford, Hyundai, Toyota, Audi, Porsche, and BMW, to name a few.

Then, we have the Chevrolet Volt. This innovative car has been with us since 2010, enabling battery power to run the vehicle initially, before the gasoline-fed generator kicks in. This is an extended range electric vehicle that can seat four people and offer hatchback convenience. In electric mode, Chevrolet states that the battery will run dry in 53 miles. With the Range Extender motor, the total possible range in the Volt is 420 miles.

The last time we had the Chevrolet Volt was in 2011. It seems like a good time to revisit this innovative car.

There is a lot to like about the newest Volt. Our 2017 LT tester felt lighter than the original model we tested six years ago. It is also more attractive with a smarter looking interior. The feedback one could give the new Volt is that it is more aligned with the rest of the Chevrolet lineup; it looks and feels more "normal."

The electric motor offers instant torque for up to 53 miles. It provides traction down to the front wheels only. Once the battery is drained, power is transferred to a new 1.5-liter Range Extender. The power transfer is seamless; you do not feel a thing! You do feel the Range Extender. It is a lively motor that propels the Volt with ease.

The cabin is better designed with great graphics on the instrument binnacle. A float-

ing tablet crowns the center stack, housing Chevrolet's MyLink infotainment system. Volt owners also get OnStar's connected services, including the 4G LTE Wi-Fi hotspot. A sloping hatchback gives way for a decent amount of cargo space, with the two rear seats folded flat for more goodies.

Volt pricing starts at \$33,220. Our LT tester came with a sticker price of \$36,470. For more luxury, the Premier version is available for \$4,350 more.

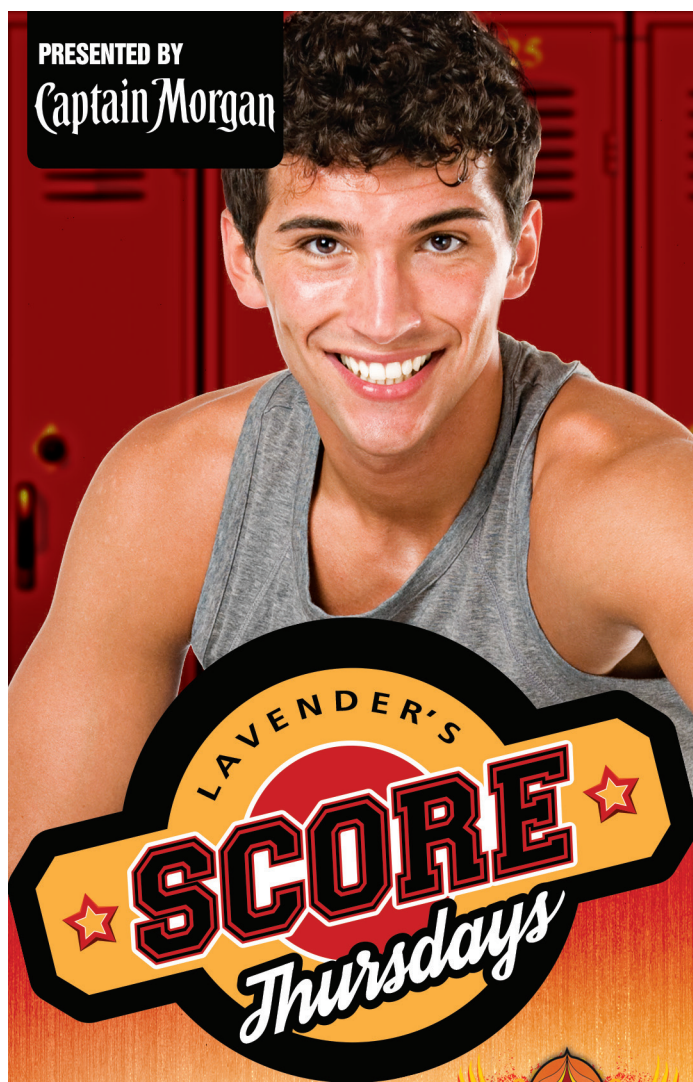
These two vehicles are a perfect example of what car companies can do when they put their minds together in living toward a life away from the gas pump. The Chevrolet Bolt EV is a great solution that is more attainable than most other solutions and fits perfectly with the urban lifestyle. We would not be surprised if we would see the Bolt EV out in the suburbs and beyond. The 238-mile range is indeed a great selling tool.

But, for those looking to go electric yet want a greater range and access to a gas pump, the Chevrolet Volt is a great solution for everywhere, both in town and away from it all. You also get it all: an EV to start off, lending to more gasoline use for longer trips.

Either way, all it takes is a plug. Though Chevrolet will provide you with one to plug into a 110-volt outlet, there are plenty of charging stations around our region to keep you moving. These include the QuickCharge stations for Level 3 charging that will cut down the time of recharging the battery. Most stations are actually Level 2 (220-volt charge) and are found commonly in certain public ramps, grocery stores, and shopping centers.

Chevrolet is on the right track toward providing plug-in electric vehicles at a more attainable price point. They are easy to operate and maintain, along with normal operational functions. That is all it takes to consider going electric: making it accessible to all of us. ■

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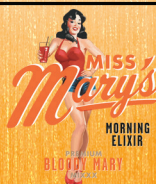
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By Randy Stern

[RIDE REVIEW]

2017 NISSAN TITAN



here is one word that describes the current state of the pickup truck market: volume.

Better make that two words, as in “sales volume.”

Looking at 2016’s sales numbers, it is clear that the pickup truck has been the big revenue stream for at least three manufacturers in the USA. Ford, General Motors, and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles enjoyed a bountiful 2016 for their pickup truck offerings. Ford’s F-Series enjoyed their 40th year of sales leadership among all industry products. GM had a decent year with their Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra, while FCA’s RAM Truck brand had a strong jump in their full-sized pickup truck offerings.

This leaves Toyota and Nissan. Though their volume is not up with the “domestic three,” Toyota had a steady 2016 for their Tundra pickups. Meanwhile, Nissan has lifted

themselves out of the doldrums. The Titan and Titan XD offerings are on an upward trajectory, thanks to the introduction of the half-ton model, the gasoline-fueled V8 and additional cab choices for the “heavy half” XD and half-ton.

This turnaround has helped Nissan validate its Titan lineup. By introducing a diesel-fueled “heavy half” XD first, one wondered whether it would be worthy of competing against Ford, GM, FCA, and Toyota in the big truck arena. It is widely understood that a huge percentage of pickup truck sales are of half-ton models, such as the F-150, Silverado 1500, Sierra 1500, RAM 1500, and Tundra.

For 2017, this problem was resolved for Nissan. The new half-ton Titan has helped jump start sales and conversations among truck customers. This includes GLBT truck owners, in particular those of us who use them for work as well as play.

In fact, the half-ton Titan already won *Truck Trend’s* Pickup of The Year. This could be the first of several awards expected to be presented to Nissan’s big truck.

For those reasons, we were ecstatic to receive a 2017 Nissan Titan half-ton four-wheel drive model with the luxurious Platinum Reserve trim in the crew cab configuration. We were very curious whether the Nissan stacks well with everyone else in this most important and high-volume segment.

One look at the Titan and one could come away with the impression that it does look the part. It arrives with a massive grille. In the Platinum Reserve, it is all chrome. Some might say that it may have come from another pickup, but a closer examination would tell you otherwise. The profile is a giveaway to the Titan’s uniqueness. Chromed details, such as the side “grille” and specific chrome grille and trim for the Platinum Reserve also create uniqueness compared to the competition. However, there is a bit of a “kink” bridging the engine bay area and the cab itself that signifies the Titan above all. Once you find what makes this Nissan stand out above the rest, then you are assured you are getting a solid pickup.

As with most standard crew cab configura-

Photos by Randy Stern





A six-speed automatic transmission connects the Endurance V8 to its four-wheel drive system, easily switchable by a knob on the center stack.

tions, the bed measures out to 67 inches inside. It is the only bed configuration for half-ton Titan crew cab models. Single cab models get only a 98.5-inch bed. With four-wheel drive, the Titan stands 10.1 inches above the ground for superb clearance on tougher, uneven surfaces.

As a trend in crew cab pickups, the passenger space is large. Front seats are big with plenty of comfort available in the Platinum Reserve trim. Rear seat room is good with a comfortable bench with split rear seat backs for access to a small storage space. In the Platinum Reserve, the rear seats are heated. A wide center console offers both covered and uncovered storage that is deep for larger items to be fitted. Luxury is the key to enjoying the Platinum Reserve, with its two-tone black and brown leather motif.

The driver enjoys huge dials with a comprehensive TFT information screen in the middle. This is the opposite of every truck out in the market, and a very shrewd move by Nissan to emphasize basic information than flood the truck with a huge screen in-between the speedometer and tachometer.

NissanConnect is controlled by a touch screen in the upper middle of the center stack, within reach of the driver. The screen also houses the output for the Round View Monitor. Every control and switch corresponds to Nissan's standard switchgear. Shifting is done by a huge column-mounted lever, which helps in freeing up console space for storage. Rockford Fosgate supplied the sound, while there is Bluetooth, USB, and aux cable connectivity to the infotainment system, including a navigation system.

The short bed came with a lot of amenities for load organization and control. The side walls of the bed have channel tracks with LED lights underneath them. The cargo lights on the back of the cab also help to illuminate the bed at night when a load is needed. There are also skid plates on the bed liner, as well as other organization options for proper use of the rear cargo hold. The Titan is designed to make things easier for loading and off-loading of construction materials, tools, and everything you need for landscap-

ing to having fun year round.

To haul in the Titan, Nissan decided it needed an engine to match its capabilities. All half-ton Titans come with a 5.6-liter V8, similar to the one on the previous generation model. However, this V8 was upgraded for more performance, jumping the horsepower to 390, with 394 pound-feet of torque. Named the "Endurance V8," the improved engine delivers strong power and good acceleration throughout the power band.

A six-speed automatic transmission connects the Endurance V8 to its four-wheel drive system, easily switchable by a knob on the center stack. Titan Crew Cabs are capable of carrying 1,610 pounds of payload in the bed, with a maximum towing capacity of 9,390 pounds. As for fuel economy, we observed an average of 14.1 MPG.

In driving the Titan, you will find a smooth ride that is absorbent on rougher surfaces. This truck has double wishbones up front and multi-leaf set-up in the rear. Expect some lean and roll through the corners, but a more careful approach will keep the Titan even through some of the more twisty roads.

Steering feel is tight and direct. For the half-ton, the turning radius is a bit wide, but controlled to make even U-turns easy. In tight spots, the Titan will need to take a few turns to get itself on track. Brakes are very solid with good stopping power. Normal, panic, and winter stops are controlled with the ABS kicking in at the right time.

Aside from the Round View Monitor, Nissan added Blind Spot Warning and Rear Cross-Traffic Alert, sonar sensing for front and back.

Currently, pricing for the Titan starts at \$29,580 for a single cab, rear-wheel drive S level trim model. On the opposite side of the half-ton spectrum, our Platinum Reserve crew cab four-wheel drive model came with a sticker price of \$56,595. One consumer item to note: the Titan is covered by a five-year/60,000-mile basic warranty, which Nissan touts as the longest coverage among full-sized pickups.

There are plenty of conclusions to make about the Titan. For one, Nissan finally cracked



the code on how to make a full-sized half-ton pickup truck to meet with competition. Still, there are arguments against the half-ton Titan, with all four competitors capable of higher towing and payload capacities, along with achieving better real world fuel economy. Those are the key points of comparison Nissan needs to meet or exceed with their half-ton models.

Even though the Titan XD is available for greater towing and payload needs, most pickup truck buyers will go with the half-ton models. Not just for the price point, but the fact that not every truck owner actually tows 10,000 pounds on any given trailer or carry 1,500 pounds of stuff in the bed. For work, perhaps. For play, a truck owner knows that larger boats require at least a three-quarter ton or one-ton pickup to do the job competently.

With all of this aside, the Nissan Titan half-ton pickup truck is a solid contender. It is a livable truck that will do the job, from bringing home the new lawn or garden project to bringing up the ATVs to the cabin for the summer. ■

By Randy Stern

KEEPING THE CAR ON THE ROAD A LOOK AT TIRES



hen was the last time you bought tires for your vehicle?

We often don't talk about tires. Yet, they are the most important piece of your car, truck, and SUV. They are a "wear" item, which means that when your tires start losing traction because the tread is being worn down, they need to be replaced.

It is where the rubber meets the road, literally.

It is an interesting fact that the average consumer does not talk about tires. We often take them for granted. Perhaps it is time to talk about tires.

First off, we should discuss the types of tires that are available. You probably have heard about these (or, read them on our Ride Reviews), but do you know which is

which? Here is a guide to the most common tire types on the roads (and off of it) around here.

ALL-SEASON TIRES: These types of tires are becoming common items, as they represent a tire that does it all. If it's raining, the tread design enables water to be channeled away from the car, providing more tread to the road. It is assumed that they would be fine in snow, mud, and ice, even when the tire is rated for "M+S" (Mud and Snow) on the sidewall. Yes, but not really. All-season tires could go through mud, but the soupiest surfaces could yield a loss in traction. The same with snow; the softer the snow, the less traction you might experience. As for ice, forget it. No traction would be available on icy surfaces. If you drive year-round and are cautious during winter storms, these tires would be sufficient.

WINTER TIRES: There are some winters where it is mild. But for bad winters with lots of precipitation, like the one we just experienced, the need for specific winter tires is a must. These tires are made of a rubber compound that is soft and yielding for varying tire pressures. Their tread is designed for maximum traction on snow and ice. Some tires could be studded, additional metal pieces that are slotted in holes for maximum traction on icy surfaces. Keep in mind that it is illegal to drive on studded tires on Minnesota highways and roads, but please check your local laws regarding these tires for other uses. One thing to consider about winter tires is outside air temperature. The softer rubber compounds are sensitive to temperature, so it is not smart to have them on when the outside temperature is above 40–45 degrees Fahrenheit. We actually suggest considering getting a set of winter tires along with your

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36 →



Photo by Randy Stern

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regular tires. That way, you can survive another bad winter on those tires.

“SUMMER” TIRES: There are plenty of tires that are not rated for all-season use. They are becoming rare these days, or made for a specific purpose. In particular, high performance tires or racing tires. The rubber compounds on these tires are made to be driven on hotter road surfaces and air temperatures. Speed-rated tires (mainly Z-rated performance tires) also combine a maximum speed limit to equate to a specific air pressure for optimal use. These are tires no one wants to drive on when the temperatures drop below 50–55 degrees Fahrenheit due to sensitivity to outside air. Also, some summer tires are not made to manage wet surfaces, so they could become risky to drive in a rainstorm.

LIGHT TRUCK TIRES: As a rule of thumb, one cannot put passenger car tires on pickup trucks. By pickup trucks, we mean traditional cab/box/frame pickups. Tire sizes are specific, as they should begin with the letters “LT.” Their construction and compounds are specific for heavier use, including hauling in the box up to payload limits and for towing.

ALL-TERRAIN TIRES: For owners of the Jeep Wrangler, Toyota 4Runner, or any specific vehicle that is designed for off-highway use, you will most likely purchase bigger, knobby tread tires. There is a specific purpose for these tires; to provide traction and grip on surfaces beyond the tarmac. On highway, they can be quite noisy. Yet, they can also be superb in the rain and snow.

When shopping for tires, it is important to know a few basic bits of information. One, you must know your tire size. The size of the tire must at least match the exact size as stated on the current set of tires of your vehicle. Any other size or speed rating might impact performance and efficiency of the vehicle. You also need to know the year, make, and model of your vehicle, since not all tires of that specific size and speed rating are equal to the specific vehicle you are driving.

There are other things to look for in selecting the right replacement tires for your vehicle. A tire store or dealership would try to sell you a tire that fits right for your vehicle, but may not get the best tire warranty or tread life. Consider the length of ownership of your vehicle or the stipulations of your lease before you choose a tire that could end up costing you more at the end of its tread life.

Some of us may put on a more custom tire/wheel set-up. There are plenty of things to consider when doing so. First and foremost, will the new set-up fit in the wheel well? If not, try a smaller set-up. You might even consider suspension and body modifications to make it work. The most important piece is to see whether the tire/wheel set-up fits your lifestyle without compromising driving dynamics.

Lastly, we cannot make suggestions on which brand to go with. We test plenty of vehicles year-round and not all tires are equal. There is actually parity among tire brands, as specific tires stand out of their lineup over others.

However, we can suggest looking into support options for your new set of tires. Check to see if they are covered under your vehicle’s support programs, such as roadside assistance or through AAA. If not, a tire store may offer a protection plan for your new set of tires. See what they offer before you buy.

This is not an easy purchase decision because tires vary for each vehicle’s purpose and driving conditions. However, choosing the right tires will save you headaches down the line to ensure an enjoyable vehicular experience. ■



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Disorderly Families: Infamous Letters from the Bastille Archives

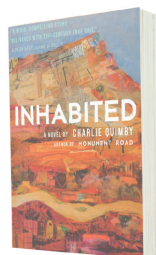
Arlette Farge, Michel Foucault
University of Minnesota Press
\$35



Collected here are 94 lettres de cachet (letters of arrest) sent by the parents of disorderly children, by the spouses of drunken husbands or libertine wives, seeking to incarcerate the problem person. Addressed by the score to the King during France's Ancien Régime, voices in this selection were those of ordinary people who wrote, or hired scribes to write, seeking for royal surcease for their family problems. Their complaints not only lay bare individual quarrels, but taken together show something of the daily life of the French citizen, relationships between men and women, husbands and wives, and how they used the available systems of power to make demands to better their lives. A fascinating view of how ordinary lives came to be touched by power.

Inhabited

Charley Quimby
Torrey House Press
\$16.95



Like Quimby's debut novel *Monument Road*, Colorado-based *Inhabited* weaves the threads of several, seemingly disparate, lives into a comprehensive, if not complete, whole. But then, part of the message is that no one is ever really complete or whole; one makes one's life from what is. Meg Mogrin is a real estate dealer, Isaac Samson is real estate-less; Meg works through complex deals and still deals with the death of her sister; Isaac deals with getting through the day, the hour, the minute. Between these two worlds is an interconnection between Meg's lost sister, and an item Isaac found in a canyon. A long-buried secret, encountered in *Monument Road*, must be laid to rest before either of these individuals can find peace. Excellent read.

Niesha Crosland: Life of a Pattern

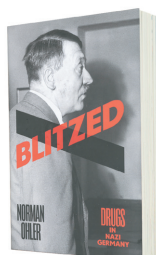
Niesha Crosland
\$160



"Where do you get your ideas?" is the inevitable question every artist in whatever medium must field at some point. This lush, oversized book is the personal account of one artist, designer Niesha Crosland. While she intersperses the illustrations (250, 182 in color) with her own work, she also uses specific conversations about patterns with musicians, mathematicians, designers, and psychotherapists as well as specific technical detail. Crossing geographical, temporal, and artistic borders, Crosland discusses how design can affect mood, while color works its ways with design. More than theory are the illustrations of pattern and design in her own work in restaurant, hotel, and home interiors. This handsome volume can be studied by art professionals, amateurs, and anyone who gasps at the inherent beauty of things.

Blitzed: Drugs in Nazi Germany

Norman Ohler
Allen Lane
\$22.95



While preaching abstinence, a drug-free Third Reich Germany was also becoming the center of pharmaceutical research (think Merck, et al.) Once the military discovered that troops could be kept up and going on miracle chemicals (methamphetamine) made into Pervitin, in chocolates for busy hausfraus, pills for exam-bound students, nearly everyone succumbed. "Patient A" himself, forced to stand for hours in the chilly winds, arms raised, fell under the spell of his personal physician, Dr. Theodor Morrell, and his unending mixes of "vitamins" that reanimated the flagging Hitler as needed. Guderian's blitzkrieg through the mountains in armored tanks becomes comprehensible when one realizes the men were "pumped" to stay awake for three days or more. Based on unpublished documents, archives, and interviews, *Blitzed* is a chilling read. ■

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The "G" Folder

The demand came shortly after we got married, and it chilled me to the core.

"You need to cancel your Spotify account and join mine," she said with casual authority, as if this wasn't the most terrifying thing she'd ever said to me.

I stared at her for a full minute before I was finally able to speak. "No," I yelled. "No! No! No!" It was the only word that would form. It came from deep within my primitive reptile brain, the ancient center that controls flight or fight.

"Why not?" she asked. "It's stupid to pay for two subscriptions." Now, she was just being cruel, bludgeoning my hysteria with sensibility.

In a panic, I started shouting random alarms that might distract her from the topic. "Fire!" I yelled. "Tornado! Snake! Let's have sex!"

In response, she calmly peered over her glasses and raised an eyebrow. She's a psychotherapist, and I'm pretty certain she learned that look as part of her doctoral training. It has the effect of leveling me when I'm acting particularly nutty.

"Why don't you want to merge our music accounts?" she asked.

"Because then you'll see what music I listen to," I said.

"But I already know what music you listen to," she said. "Showtunes and songs sung by Sinatra and other mid-century crooners who treated women terribly."

"Umm, I also listen to Ella Fitzgerald, Doris Day, and Sarah Vaughn, and they weren't misogynists," I said.

"Stop trying to change the subject," she said. "Why don't you want me to see your music playlists?"

"Because," I admitted, "I have a terrible secret."

When you get married, you're supposed to share everything. This,

frankly, is anathema to me. I'm fine sharing finances, household duties, and stuff like that. But there are certain things related to my elemental nature that I'd like to keep private.

And a Spotify playlist titled "G" is one of those things.

"G" stands for "guilty." Initially, I labeled the playlist "Guilty Pleasures," but after having a nightmare that my playlists were made public, and my enemies could easily access them, I changed the folder to "G" hoping that it would fool those looking for new ways to humiliate me.

The folder contains songs that I would never admit to listening to. These are the songs that I sing loudly while driving alone, usually at night so that passengers in neighboring cars can't clearly see my face and read my lips.

This folder doesn't host the fun, stupid, sing-a-long songs that everyone admits to loving. "I Think I Love You," by the Partridge Family, for example, is not hidden. It's in a folder called "Fun, Happy, Good Times!"

The "G" folder is reserved for songs like "I Hope You Dance," by Lee Ann Womack, which is so emotionally manipulative that you should be required to get a doctor's prescription in order to listen to it. And the folder also holds "Baby, Baby," by Amy Grant, a song that was released in my 20s and was responsible for one of the most traumatic moments of my early lesbian career. It's too painful to discuss, but suffice it to say I will never again admit to knowing all the words of an Amy Grant song on a first date.

After revealing the contents of the "G" folder to my spouse, she took my hand in hers and quietly led me to her Spotify account. There she clicked on a folder called "Private!!!! Don't Touch!!!!" The first song on the playlist was Captain and Tennille's "Muskrat Love." I sighed in relief and joined her account. ■

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Et ceux qui se préoccupent toujours de ce qui se passe dans le lit.

The Pacific Southwest

We crammed in the van, smiling far too broadly, laughing far too much. The music playlist started. We cranked up the bass.

The road stretched forward and soon we left the city behind. We were headed to the Pacific Southwest.

Twelve hours later we were caught in a snowstorm at the height of the Rockies. We ambled along at 15 mph, eventually pulled over to the side of the road. We got out of the van, laughing, ripped off our shirts, and took a picture with the altitude sign behind us.

A few hours later we pulled into a parking lot. The crepuscular grays casting the world in their shadowy haze. Our pupils dilated to pull in the surroundings. We were quieter as we packed water and sandwiches into our bags. PB&Js. Another couple pulled across from us, a couple in their early 30s. We quietly oohed and aahed about the man in particular, a lumberjack hipster in his Patagonia jacket and REI boots.

We climbed. The cairns, precarious. The lone winged form which traced an elongated shadow, stretching, dilating, in the angled half-light, before compressing and vanishing off the edge of the cliff. The sun was no more than a whispered promise, a prayer, musitation heard in twilight. The surrounding hills streaked green, like varnished copper. I touched my hand to my head to wipe off the beads of sweat. They were gritty, like dust.

An angled spread of path and then the delicate arch. The thin columns leading up to a thick, orange keystone. The small plant that grew, alone, silent, at the top. A photographer sat quietly in the distance. At the edge of a cliff, four young men in their early 20s muttered muted jokes and snickered. We saw the couple and shared smiles, ogling the man once more. Fifteen minutes later, gold spread like something born — warm, cool, liquid, spread on the landscape — and the sun rose warm and I felt the tickle of a sunburn just begun.

The next day, we climbed Angel's Landing. My body ached. The fear permeated and sprang downward, spiraling, a mile and a half, along a sheer cliff face to the ground.

Bryce Canyon. The spires. The rain pouring down. We laughed and ran from panorama to panorama, taking in the view with eyes and flashing lenses.

Death Valley. We climbed the dunes. Like some alien Mars. The dryness of the air. The sparse, bare, birch-colored brush. Our footprints. I remembered books from my youth about Egypt and King Tut. We sprinted down the hill face, as fast as we could.

When the sun set that evening, we sat on the top of one dune. For a brief moment, we all were silent, and the sky was pink, and the emotion was felt and not spoken. We felt that we would die and now was now and we were alive; we were ALIVE and the moment and our lives were like origami opening then closing, opening then closing, we were...

We laughed and retuned to the car.

We arrived in Las Vegas exhausted. My friend booked us a penthouse suite at the Bellagio. We went straight to the pool, the grime slicking off our bodies and giving the surface of the water the peculiar gleam of an oil spill. Then we spent at least two hours back in the room getting ready: cutting our hair, ironing our shirts, airing out our suits. When we were finally all dressed, we took photos. We drank cocktails (too many). We used a Polaroid because it's an inside joke and you don't need to know.

We barely even left the room that night and, when we did, we just walked outside and saw the people hustling up and down the streets. We got McDonalds and I got two McDoubles and a small fry. We sat in a booth to the right, speaking too loudly for the time of night.

On our drive back home, the car broke down and we were lost in a black cage in a moonless sky on the edge of the highway. The darkness was only broken by the intermittent, intense beams of the oncoming 18-wheelers. There was almost a rhythm to their lights.

I called AAA, and they towed us to the nearest dealership. We slept in the car.

We awoke at dawn. A quick fix, the people inside told us, bemused that we spent the night asleep in their front cul-de-sac. We got some breakfast, talked to a veteran at the table next to us.

When we returned, the journey over, to my friend's house in Minnesota, I drove home alone. I remembered a conversation, back in the snow, back in the Rockies. My friend's voice, "I've never had gay friends before. I've always wanted them, but never really had any good ones til now. This trip is amazing. I'm so glad I met you all."

We shared other things in that car, but, like all things, the specifics have faded, and I can only remember two or three songs from the playlist, and a few snippets of conversation, and the setting sun at the dunes with the silence, and the cool waters of the Bellagio, and even the warmth of my friend as he fell asleep, his head dipped onto my shoulder and I stared out the window at the silhouette of the mountains that divide America. ■

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